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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concept of Bulgarian national mythology, a secondary mythology that emerged around the late 18th century based on the fundamental opposition Chaos-Cosmos, near-far, up-down, good-evil, God-Satan, and human-non-human. The new mythology redefined self-images and images of the Other, the main figures, and narratives about them, creating a new version of ancestral history. This paper examines the language stereotypes and resources of self-images and images of the Other, based on 19th century Bulgarian texts. It begins by describing the problem with linguistic resources related to Bulgarian national mythology used for creating figures of the Other and for marking attitudes toward them. It discusses the existence of purism and the pursuit of international terminology and vocabulary, noting the use of Russian words and constructions by many Bulgarians. It explains that there were linguistic resources available for the development of national mythology, including the language and imagery of the Bible and the image of the mother. Bulgarians considered ancient Greek mythology a model, particularly during the time of their struggle for ecclesiastical and cultural emancipation. The presence of ancient Greek mythology in Bulgarian culture is evident in Vóynikov's 1871 comedy, "Civilization Misunderstood." Three groups of characters within the comedy are clearly marked by their linguistic resources. (SM)

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National Mythology and its Linguistical Resources: The Bulgarian case

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Every identity is build on the basis of some kind of identifying core that includes some marks of distinguishment, of continuity, codified in some kind of mythology, which could be primary or secondary. In both cases it is a complex of narratives that carries crucial knowledge and for this reason is often repeated in some conditions that are strictly regulated in space, time and in ritual practice. These narratives arrange the relations of the subject of the identity with the world both in vertical and horizontal plane. This is taking place by building a structure of representations, feelings and strategies, coded in meaningful functional figures that have their precise estimation. The subject of the identity identifies and correlates with them. The analogy between the main mythical figures and the archetypes described by C. G. Jung proposes additional resources for penetration in every mythical system.

National mythology is a secondary mythology that had emerged not earlier than the late 18th century. It is based on the fundamental opposition Chaos - Cosmos, near - far, up - down, good - evil, God (gods) - Satan (demons), human - non-human, etc. and do not deny already existing Christian construct. The new mythology redefined self-images and images of the other, the main figures and the narratives about them. It built new variation of the time of the ancestors - the glorious past that had its historical co-ordinates but was still sacral. The pantheon changed - new figures emerged, old ones gained new meaning. The figures of the Baptist and the Saint (the Heavenly Defender) remained but they obtained clear national features. Gradually the main figure of the Founder was reshaped and associated with the state. The group of the Heroes and Warriors increased so do the narratives about their great deeds and glorious victories.

Side by side with the own Heroes appeared the figures of the Other. They communicated in some way with the figures of the own and formed with them a system. The

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Other appeared in several main types that had their variations: The Abductor, The Barbarian, The Religious Other, The Plotter - weak, civilised but perfidious, The Envious, The Insidious Beauty. In some cases these types and their variations represented qualities that could combine in one figure. In their essence the main figures were archetypes and they had their analogies not only in some abstract mythology but in the Bible too. All mythological narrative structures and images were built by linguistic elements. One could even say that they are essential part of the particular language that carries them. This paper tries to propose one possible point of departure towards the language stereotypes and resources of the self-images and the images of the Other, based on some Bulgarian texts mainly from nineteenth century.

To begin with I will try to examine very briefly the problem about the linguistical resources of Bulgarian national mythology used for nomination of these figures and for marking the attitude towards them. This includes also the means of constructing of the system of the imagery, used by the builders of the national mythology. I will focus only on some of the general particularities not only because of the limited time I have, but also because the unusual situation in which I am speaking - I am Bulgarian who is now speaking English in Greece. This situation obviously does not make easy the analysis of the stylistic features of the texts from 19th century.

Looking at such kind of problem one should bear in mind the existence of the typical for every early nationalism pursuit of **purism**, of substitution of the foreign words with 'own', very often - with newly build. It is characteristic for the Bulgarian case that this purism was relatively weak, that it was declared but not so strictly put into practice. Parallel to the purism here existed another mighty trend that had almost the opposite direction - the pursuit of introducing **international terminology and vocabulary**. By the way, purifying the language from one type foreign words (for example Turkish) leads to introducing other foreign words - very often Russian.

The problem about the Russian words even nowadays is actual for Bulgarian language. Even now many Bulgarians incline to use Russian words and constructions, inappropriate for the system of Bulgarian language, due to closeness and similarity of the two Slavonic languages, due to the great number of Bulgarians, graduated in Russia, due to the obligatory teaching of Russian language in Bulgarian schools during almost the whole 20th century, due to political reasons, etc. The competition between resources with different origin leaded to their stylistical differentiation, so that words with Turkish origin often are used to

mark the wish for nonformal unceremonious communication, while the use of resources with other foreign origin marks a (wish for) high, learned speech. On the other hand the use of specific kind of resources in the higher style marks specific ideological or even political position, affiliation or preference. This could be detected in other languages, but it is especially characteristic for Bulgarian. Or at least it was, until globalisation did not impose English as lingua franca.

There were several sources of linguistical resources for the forging of national mythology. First of them was the language and the imagery of the Bible. In Bulgarian case this meant Greek language, as the Bible was used in Greek (later - translated from Greek) for almost the whole period when national mythology was built. One could add also the religious literature, first of all hagiography. The main plots of Bulgarian national mythology - the myth about the burned books, the myth about the kidnapped young woman, the myth about the kidnapped faith[1] - drew linguistical resources from hagiography. In some sense this was prolongation of the medieval tradition, which used to give the great figures of the own heroes and of the enemy names from the Bible, such as New Solomon, New Cain, etc. The names of some historic figures, first of all Alexander the Great, were recalled on the same pattern.

The image of the mother, symbolising the motherland, was characteristic for the beginning of Bulgarian national Revival. Its earliest and most prominent manifestation was in the manuscript dialogues of Neophyt Bozveli from the 1840s, written completely in the tradition of the Bible. The author was even compared with prophet Jeremiah. During the 1860s and 1870s the same image was used by Khristo Botev (1849-1876), who applied some resources from the vernacular language and from folklore. In both cases the parallel with the archetypal image of the Holy Virgin was clear and it determined the attitude towards the figure of the mother and towards linguistical means by which this attitude was manifested. The replacing of the Biblical tradition with vernacular language, folklore and popular Christianity was common feature of the development of every national culture from the early modern times, but this was especially characteristic for Bulgarian case.

Speaking about **Modern Greek language** one must mention that in the beginning this was language that carried to Bulgarians the main text of nationalism and thus - the pattern for its discourse. [2] On the other hand Bulgarians perceived (adopted) ancient Greek mythology as a model. They even searched some kind of connection with ancient Greek civilisation. Many attempts to find some proximity with Alexander the Great were characteristic for that time. The book *Comparative stories. About the friendship between*

ancient Hellens and Slavs (1853) pursued similar aim. Some attempts to adapt to Bulgarian language the names of ancient Greek gods were made. Thus *Apollo* became *Guslan* (which means something like 'fiddler'); *Eros* became *Lyubimko* (following the Bulgarian words for 'love' and 'beloved'), etc. The poets from the first generation like Nayden Gerov (1823-1900), Dobri Chintoulov (1823-1886), Petko R. Slaveykov (1827-1895), etc. sometimes used these names.

Greek antiquity was unquestionable high model for Bulgarians from the period and they searched in it arguments even for their struggle for ecclesiastical and cultural emancipation, which they carried on with the heirs of the ancient Hellens. Among these arguments, side by side with the thesises of Jakob Phillip Fallmerayer[3], were Plato' s dialogues. From this viewpoint Georgi Rakovski several times[4] analysed one famous fragment from *Cratylus* (409d-e) dealing with barbarisms in ancient Greek. They were seen as Slav and even Bulgarian words infiltrated in ancient Greek language, showing the presence of the Slavs in ancient Greece.

One curious instance testified to the presence of ancient Greek mythology in Bulgarian culture from the period and to the 'mythical' apprehension of the present day too. It was from the comedy *Civilization Misunderstood* (1871) of Dobri Voynikov, may be the most popular Bulgarian theatrical work till nowadays.

Dimitraki: Sirs, We have similar instance from the ancient history. You have may be read about the Trojan War. In order to take revenge to Paris, who had carry off beautiful Helen, the young wife of Menelaus, ancient Hellens went to war, that lasted ten years and ended with the destruction of kingdom of Troy. And the revenge was realised. Thus, if we are men with dignity, let us revenge to that villain.

...

Pencho: War against Troy! (To Mityo). You will be the hero Achilles.
(*Civilization Misunderstood*, 4:15)

This comedy was built on one very widespread in Bulgarian literature and mass-consciousness myth about kidnapped beautiful woman. It was based on the fundamental opposition in Bulgarian national mythology: not-educated but virtuous Bulgarians versus educated, but perfidious Greeks. This opposition was set by the first significant text of Bulgarian nationalism - *Slaveno-Bulgarian History* (*Istoriya slavyanobolgarskaya*) by monk

Paisiy from Khilendar (1762). The mythical plot narrated about the kidnapping of something extremely valuable, which Bulgarians possessed and foreigners took away; this crime generates attempts for restitution. It is obvious that this plot repeated the story of Trojan War and even some old myths, such as the myth about Persephone.

In *Civilization Misunderstood* the abductor was Greek who presented himself as Dr. Margaridi. This name sounded like the Bulgarian word for *donkey* and this popular etymology was one of the sources of comic effects. In this plot the abductor was compulsory foreigner, very often a person belonging to another confession (Muslim, rarely Catholic) and not necessary Greek. In the later comedy *Fudulesku* by Todor Peev, built on the same plot, the abductor was Romanian. Thinking about linguistical resources it is important to draw attention on the fact that Margaridi and his disciples very often used French language. Or, more precisely speaking, the disciples used some kind of comic broken French. In one moment this language appeared to be a sign for the demonic nature of the foreigner. Granny Stoyna, a representative of the 'old', of the conservatives, exclaimed in her dialect manner:

Real Antichrist! See, he dragged him down and went to lure, didn't he? Ha, why it didn't come into my mind to test him. I should have told *In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holly Spirit* and he should have collapsed. Yes! Oh, why it didn't come into my mind?

(*Civilization Misunderstood*, 3:4)

The abductor himself did not miss the opportunity to explain his behaviour and to make a connection with the universally recognised evil-doers in Bulgarian literature from the time of national Revival - the clergymen from the Patriarchate, thought as Greeks, even as quintessence of the Greekness.

Excuse me, Madame Anent. This is not evil deed, but one of these good roles, that only one civilised gallant man could play. (Stuffy) Do you see me? You, *les ignorants*, that do not see an inch beyond your nose, you think that this is evil deed, but it is not. The role that I have plaid to you is nothing, compared to the big roles that my compatriots Phanariots have plaid to you, the Bulgarians, with all their holiness.

(*Civilization Misunderstood*, 5:3)

The three groups of characters in the comedy were clearly marked by the linguistical resources, used in their discourse. The perfidious abductor spoke relatively correct French; his ignorant disciples inserted French words in their Bulgarian speech and made many mistakes. The father - old-fashioned wealthy man (*chorbadgi*), who did not accept new vogues, was also a comic character; in a similar way he inserted Turkish words and expressions in his speech. Only the young patriots spoke 'clean' and 'correct' Bulgarian language, according to the author and his public. This language hardly corresponded accurately to the real special features of the speech from the period, it could be thought as recommended sample of a language that indeed became norm in the next decades.

Bulgarian national mythology appeared in late 18th and 19th century, the time of so called National Revival, existed in the form of several parallel and competing variations. Each of them used different linguistical resources. They still exist in transformed shape. The interference between them increases. Their specific features, their peculiarity are more vague nowadays and they could be detected and completely understood only through historical retrospection. It seems to me that this multitude could be traced in other Balkan peoples, Greeks included, where could be find competition and coexistence between at least two patterns. The former brought into relief the classic Hellenic antiquity; the other gave prominence to Byzantine heritage. It will be incorrect to restrict the observations to these analogies. For there are non-Balkan, European and non-European phenomena with which these trends could be compared. The very existence of these trends is sign of at least partial belonging to European community, which is not homogeneous and unalterable. There are some constants in European culture, but there are many dynamic processes too, especially in comparison with Far East civilisations. In Europe there are not only national unites, but regional too. The mutual enriching of the of chronological and regional entities is one of the main features of European community, which could be seen as 'open' (according to Karl Popper) or 'hot' (according to Claude Lévi-Strauss).

Notes

[1] See N. Aretov. Bulgaria kato "neshtastna familia". Za edin osnovopolagasht suget v bulgarskata nacionalna mitologia. - Ezik i literatura, 1999, № 1, pp. 135-145; The Kidnapped Identity and the Myth of the Book Burning. In: Political, Intellectual and Cultural Relations between Greeks and Bulgarians, 19th- 20th Centuries. Thessaloniki (in print).

[2] See N. Danova. Livres et lecture en Bulgarie sous la domination ottomane. Recherches effectuées et perspectives. - In: Le livre dans les societés pré-industrielles. Actes du Premier Colloque International du Centre de Recherches Néohellénique. FNRS. Athènes, 1982, 307-317; N. Danova. Die Rolle der griechischen Kulturinstitutionen als Modernisierungsfaktor der bulgarishen Gesellschaft im 19. Jh.- In: Actes der Tagung "Allgemeinbildung als Modernisierungsfactor: Zur Geschihte der Elementarbildung in Südosteuropa". Berlin, 1990.

[3] See N. Andreeva. Nemskata literatura v Bulgaria prez Vuzragdaneto. Kralica Mab, Sofia, 2001, pp. 330-337.

[4] See for example his work with significant title *Brief reasoning on the dark and false principles of ancient history of all European peoples* in: G. Rakovski. Sachinenija. T. 4, Bulgarski pisatel, Sofia, 1984, pp. 139-190. See also N. Aretov. Bulgarskoto vuzragdane i Evropa. Kralica Mab, Sofia, 1995.

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